

March 31, 2006

USAID/CAR Bi-weekly Report

Regional

Central Asian Countries Demonstrate their Growing Comfort in Addressing Tuberculosis (TB) Issues

In close cooperation with local organizations, USAID programs observed World TB Day on March 24 by organizing a range of events in all five Central Asian countries. In Turkmenistan, USAID's implementing partner Project HOPE led a scientific conference featuring presentations by the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, donor community, and doctors from the TB Prevention Center and the velayat-level TB Center. In Kazakhstan, three USAID-supported organizations, the National Healthy Life Style Center, the National TB Center, and the Almaty City TB Dispensary, conducted press conferences at which USAID was invited to outline international experience in dealing with TB. To encourage the dissemination of TB-related information, in all five countries, Project HOPE held contests for journalists for the best publications or programs on TB; awarded TB specialists for the best treatment results of severe TB cases; and presented a photo-exhibition of TB patients to educate the community about this dangerous disease, its prevention, and treatment.

As an important sign of recognition of its contributions to TB control in the region, USAID was invited to participate in an hour-long television program "Better to be Healthy" by the Kazakh governmental TV channel "Khabar." The TB events received broad media attention in each country, indicating the growing comfort of the region's governments in addressing TB issues.



USAID was invited to talk about international experiences in dealing with TB during press conferences organized for World TB Day in Kazakhstan.

Photo: Project Hope

Kazakhstan

USAID Launches a New Global Development Alliance Health Project

USAID and ExxonMobil Kazakhstan, Inc., launched their third joint Global Development Alliance (GDA) health project in the country on March 14, 2006, contributing \$40,000 each. The project, entitled "Partnership for Healthy Motherhood in Astana," will focus on strengthening pregnancy, labor, postpartum, and newborn care. Building upon the principles of the World Health Organization's Safe Motherhood Strategy, the initiative will work to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality rates and improve the health of the next generation of Astana's children. The project will be implemented by Abt Associates, Inc., the Kazakhstan Association of Family Physicians, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, and the Astana City Health Department. Previous USAID/ExxonMobil GDA health projects,



On March 14, USAID and ExxonMobil signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch a new GDA health project.

Photo: ExxonMobile



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carried out in 2004 and 2005, aimed to strengthen child health in the capital city and covered approximately 41% of the city's population. As a result, 116 family doctors, obstetricians, and health specialists were trained on evidence-based medicine and integrated management of childhood illnesses, contributing to improved quality of services by family doctors and nurses.

USAID-Funded NGOs Lead a Successful Advocacy Campaign

A public advocacy campaign by the Karaganda Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) EcoCenter and the NGO Reflection has recently resulted in a government decision to delay the construction of a mercury disposal site until citizens' concerns are addressed. The campaign was initiated when local authorities selected a popular recreation site three kilometers from Temirtau City for the disposal of mercury from a long-closed Karaganda Oblast (region) industrial plant. Because the proposed site is so close to the rapidly expanding city and many people visit the area, the risk of current and future mercury exposure to the general population is high.



*A local official explains his position at a roundtable organized to discuss the proposed disposal site.
Photo: Counterpart*

The CSSC EcoCenter along with the NGO Reflection, both USAID grantees through the Community Action Grant Program, conducted a series of public hearings to gauge public opinion on the controversial issue and to ensure compliance with environmental conventions. In response to voiced concerns, the two organizations initiated an advocacy campaign to facilitate local citizen participation in the decision-making process. The campaign attracted attention from a variety of government institutions, including parliament. As a result, the construction of the site has been postponed indefinitely.

Kyrgyzstan

An Association Holds Kyrgyzstan's First Privately-organized Textile Trade Fair

From March 1-7, 2006, the Association of Light Industry "LEGPROM," with USAID support, held the first international textile trade fair organized by a private entity in Kyrgyzstan and the first light industry exhibition since independence. Thirty-four local companies presented their products at the exhibition, which was attended by official trade delegations from Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The event resulted in at least forty business contacts with wholesalers from Russia and Kazakhstan and helped attract the Kyrgyz Government's attention to this young and fast developing industry that employs over 100,000 Kyrgyzstanis.



*Prime Minister Kulov and Light Industry Association's Director Asanov open the fair.
Photo: EDP*

The USAID Enterprise Development Project, implemented by Pragma, provided extensive support to the Association of Light Industry in organizing the fair, including training on organizing such events, technical expertise, and a grant to cover expenses. The project also assists the association with its organizational development, membership recruitment, and improving the range of services provided to its members.



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Association of Agribusinessmen Promotes Agro-Technologies in Kyrgyzstan

Four hundred visitors and government officials attended an open house on March 17, 2006 on the fourth anniversary of the opening of the Association of Agribusinessmen of Kyrgyzstan Jer Azygy, established with the support of USAID's Kyrgyz Agro-Input Enterprise Development Project, implemented by the International Fertilizer Development Center. Created in 2002 by a group of seven businesses, Jer Azygy has become the country's leading agricultural association with 170 dues-paying members, primarily based in southern Kyrgyzstan. The association provides farmers with services and information on modern technologies, creates conditions for the production of high yields, and contributes to increased living standards in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. Association members also gain expertise through in-country and international training opportunities, organized by USAID's Participant Training Program, implemented by the Academy for Educational Development. In 2005 alone, the association sold more than \$5.4 million worth of agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, and crop protection products to Kyrgyz farmers. The association reports that from 2003 to 2004 its member household income increased on average by 76%.



*Annually, the association holds demonstrations to present new crops and technologies to farmers.
Photo: USAID/Kg*

Turkmenistan

USAID Supports Malaria Prevention in Turkmenistan

Recently, Turkmen malaria professionals were introduced to a new resource, the reference guide "Illustrated Qualifier for Malaria Mosquitoes of Central Asia," published with USAID and OSCE support. The publication discusses integrated methods to fight malaria mosquitoes, describes malaria mosquito species prevalent in the region, and maps areas of their infestation. Malaria presents an important health concern in Turkmenistan. While there were only 140 officially recorded cases during last year, the real number is estimated to be much higher, as the majority of malaria patients are recorded as flu cases.



*A laboratory technician is trained to identify the malaria parasite in human blood cells.
Photo: AED*

USAID assists the efforts to fight malaria in the region by supporting the Roll Back Malaria Program, implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO). In response to the Turkmen Ministry of Health's request, USAID's Participant Training Program, implemented by the Academy for Educational Development, together with specialists from WHO and the Ministry of Health, fully trained all of the country's malaria specialists in the entomology, laboratory diagnostics, and treatment of the disease.

USAID also assisted the Turkmen Government in preparing an application for a malaria grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. However, the grant was not approved due to the Turkmen Government's reluctance to accurately portray the extent of the malaria situation in the country. This year, the Government of Turkmenistan intends to apply for the grant again.



Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan Takes First Steps to Assure Gender Equity in Healthcare

USAID's Healthy Family Project, implemented by Project HOPE in collaboration with the Futures Group, organized a roundtable in February 2006 to discuss the issue of gender equity in maternal and child healthcare with the Ministry of Health. The discussion was attended by representatives from the Cabinet of Ministers, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labor, local NGOs, and other donors. Participants heard a presentation by experts from the World Health Organization, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Republican AIDS Center, the Uzbekistan Women's Committee, and local youth-oriented NGOs. The discussion focused on meeting the challenges of gender equity in the context of the National Reproductive Health Strategic Plan, which is being finalized by the Ministry of Health with assistance from the Futures Group. This was the first public meeting on gender issues with multi-sector participation, and represented an important step toward adopting a national policy on gender in healthcare.



In February, USAID's project facilitated the first public meeting on gender issues with multi-sector participation in Uzbekistan.

Photo: ZdravPlus

USAID's Program Receives Strong Support from the Government of Uzbekistan

A USAID-funded seminar and follow-up conference on artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET) for livestock, held in March, was positively received by the Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture. In fact, the ministry expressed a willingness to collaborate further on these issues in the future. The four-day seminar was delivered by Israeli experts on a farm in Tashkent Oblast and provided Uzbek farmers a unique opportunity to familiarize themselves with international best practices of AI. The goal of the seminar was to enable the participants to open private AI stations on their farms and provide AI services in their communities. Twenty participating farmers received a brief course on animal anatomy and physiology as well as on the necessary equipment and technologies for AI.

Following the seminar, 300 farmers, government officials, businessmen, and scientists attended a half-day conference related to the dairy industry. The program was jointly developed and implemented by the USAID Participant Training Program, implemented by the Academy for Educational Development, and the Consulting Center for Small and Medium Business, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan.



At the seminar, farmers received practical training in modern artificial insemination techniques.

Photo: AED